

# Tourism Potentials of Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area, Ethiopia: Its Significance to Community-Based Ecotourism Development

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## Abstract

In Ethiopia, protected areas cover 14% of the country, and they play a significant role in conservation, community-based ecotourism, recreation, and employment. This study was intended to assess the potential of Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area for conservation- and community-based ecotourism development. Cross-sectional study design combining both quantitative and qualitative methods was used to describe the existing potential in Wof-washa. A total of 211 participants completed a questionnaire, and the data received were analyzed by using SPSS Version 20. Two tourism potentials were identified. The first were physical aspects such as the spectacular beauty of landscape, caves, holy water, rivers, and exceptional views of remarkable land forms. The second was biological potentials, such as two endemic flagship species, Menelick's bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus meneliki*) and Gelada baboon (*Theropithecus gelada*), and 33 other mammal species. The Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area also contains over 252 plant species, among which 29 are endemic and 7 are nearly endemic. Communities who live in the forest area are charming and willing to participate in tourism activities and offer another aspect attracting tourists. The Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area has a rich cultural heritage that includes styles of music, manuscripts, dress, crafts, and architecture which could be potential tourism resources. In general the area has exciting potential to develop community-based ecotourism, but infrastructure and facilities are either poorly developed or nonexistent. Therefore, infrastructure, accessibility and amenities such as security, promotional materials, and information centers should be developed based on community-based ecotourism standards.

**Keyword:** Potentials, Community Based Ecotourism and Wof-washa National Forest Priority Area

## 1. Introduction

Ethiopia has a large natural diversity with a range of climates resulting from its topography and latitudinal position (IUCN, 1998). The country's topographic and geographic qualities create numerous tourist attractions, varying in type and appealing to many interests. The attractions include historical, cultural, archaeological, anthropological, scenic, climatic, floral and faunal resources. Such a unique combination of attractions within a single country has no match on the African continent, and is seen rarely elsewhere in the world (Martin, 2008). Currently, there are more than 34 national parks and other IUCN-protected areas in Ethiopia. The protected areas cover 14% of the country and play a significant role in the conservation of their local environments, the recreation of ecotourists, and employment of local communities (Lemenih, 2009; CBD, 2016). More than half of the world's extreme poor live in sub-Saharan Africa, and in the past year, the number of poor in the region has increased by 9 million (World Bank, 2018). In Ethiopia about 29 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line. Ethiopia ranks 174<sup>th</sup> out of 187 countries on UNDP human development index, and average per capital incomes area less than half the current sub-Saharan average. There are tourism potentials that can bring employment and income to the impoverished.

## 2. Tourism potentials of Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area

Tourism is the largest industry and fastest-growing in the world (Asker et al. 2010). It accounted for more than 10.2% of global GDP and 292 million jobs in 2016, equivalent to 1 in 10 jobs in the global economy (Teshome and Demissie, 2018a). Community-based ecotourism (CBET) is commonly understood to be managed and owned by the community and for the community. It is a form of 'local' tourism that supports local service providers and suppliers, interprets and communicates the local culture and environment, and improves

livelihoods of the host communities (Ishmael, 2017). CBET enhances social sustainability by empowering local communities to manage their own resources, by providing meaningful employment, and by assisting with capacity building and cultural preservation (Dangi and Jamal, 2016). Environmental benefits include income generation for communities to actively protect their land from degradation and enhancement of conservation efforts in order to attract tourists, especially with regard to ecotourism initiatives (Asker et al. 2010, Teshome and Demisie, 2018). In the case of Simien Mountains National Park, Ethiopia, CBET played a significant role in the protection and sustainability of natural resources by bringing economic incentives to local communities in return for their direct participation in conservation projects (Melak, Teshome and Girma, 2017). In the past ten years, tourists visiting special natural and cultural areas have benefited from the small-scale, innovative, and low-impact offering of ecotourism (Wood 2003). Community-based ecotourism is a valuable tool when creating economic benefits that meet the needs and respect the values of a local population (Kiss, 2004).

CBET empowers and enables local communities to harness the potential of the resources found within the areas where they live (Wood, 2003). Therefore, it fosters a sense of ownership in the area with the potential to promote sustainable use and conservation by communities (Asker et al. 2010). CBET has been identified as a potential proactive means of development, especially in less developed countries (Ekwale, 2014). The development of community-based ecotourism can create new sociocultural, economic, and environmental opportunities for the locals (Asker et al. 2010). The impressive growth of CBET in developing countries has created alternative livelihoods that produce monetary benefits (Berhanu, 2008). Community based ecotourism contributed toward sustaining rural livelihoods, catalyzing new development, renewing cultural pride, empowering local peoples, and protecting biodiversity (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1995).

## **2.1 Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area**

Protected areas are appealing sites to develop CBET because of their recreational opportunities in fascinating natural habitats (Birhanu, 2015). Wof-washa National Forest Priority Area is a sanctuary for at least 193 plant and 25 animal species that are endemic to the region (Wassie, 2002), and it is the only large relict afro-montane forest in Amhara Region of Ethiopia (Hamilton, 2013).

The National Forest Priority Areas provide a range of goods and services to the people living in and around them, and to society as a whole (Getachew, 2018). The provisional services include food, fresh water, fuel wood, and herbal medicines that have direct use-value to traditional rural communities. The other values are ecosystem services such as climate regulation, watershed protection, water purification, carbon sequestration, and pollination (Daw *et al.* 2011). Moreover, local communities have assigned special religious and cultural heritage to this area (Lea *et al.* 2004). All of these services are important for the physical and spiritual wellbeing of the locals and their environment, but they provide little immediate tangible poverty relief for communities in and around the Wof-washa NFPAs. As a result, the poor are exploiting their resources in an unsustainable manner (Coria and Sterner, 2011), causing deforestation, conversion of natural vegetation to farmland, land degradation, and habitat fragmentation in the study area (Meseret, 2016). Unsustainable resource utilization in Ethiopia is related to the root cause of poverty in the country (Teshome, Worku and Astray, 2015), which is lack of alternative viable livelihoods (Mekonen, *et al.* 2017).

Ethiopian authors have written a number of studies about other protected areas such as Simien Mountains National Park (Teshome 1999), Wunania-kosoye natural attraction (Teshome, 2018), the Choke Mountains (Asres, 2015), Mazia National Park (Bekele and Teshome, 2016), and the Lake Tana Region. These other destinations present evidence that community-based ecotourism is a successful strategy in Ethiopia and that the country has great potential for implementation of CBET (Sefrin, 2012). In the case Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area, researchers' investigations have been limited to forest biodiversity (Bekele, 1993). Tourism and the Wof-washa national priority forest area are at a nexus of practice and challenge (Berhanu 2008), willingness to pay (Getachew, 2018), and the perceptions and attitudes of local people towards participatory forest management only in Tamraber district (Tadesse, and Teketal, 2017). However, the case of community-based ecotourism has not been studied in the area. Therefore, this study was designed to assess the potential of Wof-washa NFPA to develop community based-ecotourism businesses and an interim of selected variables to improve the livelihood of local communities.

## **3. Method and Materials**

### **3.1. Description of the Study Area**

Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area is found in the central Ethiopian highlands of Amhara National Regional State, 200 km north of Addis Ababa. The forest area extends from 39° 42' E and 39° 50' E longitude and 9° 34' N to 10° 20' N latitude (Berhanu, 2008).

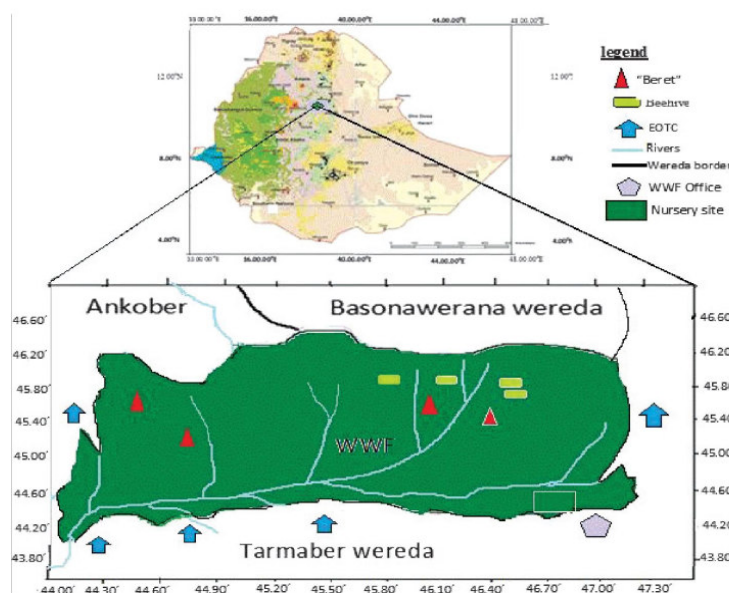


Fig.1. Map of the study area

The National Priority Forest Area program was established in 1880, during the reign of emperor Menelik II, and Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area was designated as a state reserve forest (Gebremarkos, 1998). There is a tale of King Zerayacob declaring the Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area as a “king’s forest” in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is believed to be the first state forest in Ethiopia. The national priority forest area lies within three districts, Tamraber, Akober and Bassona, (Figure 1) with a total area 144km<sup>2</sup>. It is of regional biodiversity significance, maintains ecological services, and is the basis of livelihood for around 1400 households living in and around the forest (Hamilton, 2013).

### 3.1.1. Physical Features

The Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area receives about 1400 mm mean annual rainfall. The bimodal rainfall distribution is characterized by a long wet-season (between July and September), and a medium dry-season (between March and May) interrupted by small rains. The annual temperature ranges between a mean minimum of 10° C and a mean maximum of 20° C (Bekele, 1993). With its steep slopes facing eastward, the topographic view of the forest is magnificent. Its altitude ranges from 2,000 m to 3,730 m above sea level (Birdlife International, 2018; Spooner, 2014).

### 3.1.2. Plant Diversity of Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area

Wof-washa Forest is a dry mountain mixed broad-leaved/conifer forest. Approximately 252 species of plants are present in the forest. Of these, 12% of the plant species in Wof-washa Forest are believed to be endemic to Ethiopia (Teketay and Bekele, 1995; Spooner, 2014). The diverse species could attract visitors from all over the globe. Some valuable and dominant higher plant species are *Afrocarpus gracilior*, *Bersama abyssinica*, *Dovyalis*, *Embelia schimperi*, *Galiniera saxifrage*, *Haygenia abyssinica*, *Hypericum revolutum*, *Juniperus procera*, *Maesa lanceolate*, *Maytenus arbutifolia*, *Maytenus cf. obscura*, *Myrsine Africana*, *Olea europaea ssp. Cuspidate*, *Osyris quadripartite*, *Pavetta abyssinica*, *Pittosporum abyssinica*, *Rosa abyssinica* and two unknown species (Bekele, 1993).

### 3.1.3. Faunal Diversity

Viewing wild animals in the protected area is one of the most fascinating tourism activities and is always considered a tourism potential in any tourist destination. About 33 mammals were recorded in Wof-washa NFPA. Some of the commonly observed mammals includes Colobus monkey (*Colobus gureza*), Hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*), Menelick’s bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus meneliki*) Gelada baboon (*Theropithecus gelada*), Grivet monkey (*Ceropithecus aethiops*), Rock hyrack (*Procavia habessinica*), as well as evidence of small buck/duiker and some large mammals including leopard (*Panthera pardus*), serval (*Felis serval*), klipspringer (*Oreotragus oreotragus*) common jackal (*Canis aureus*), wild cat (*Felis sylvestris*), porcupine (*Hystrix cristata*), scrub hare (*Lepus saxatilis*), harvey’s duiker (*Cephalophus harveyi*) and, most surprisingly, wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*) (EWNHS, 1996; Spooner, 2014). Of the above mammals, Menelick’s bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus meneliki*) and the Gelada baboon (*Theropithecus gelada*) are endemic to the country.

### 3.1.4. Avifauna Diversity

Bird watching is a well-known tourist activity in many parts of the world. Watching bird species gives special pleasure for visitors, especially for an ornithologist. An outstanding diversity of bird species have been recorded in Wof-washa, which attracts birding tourists from all parts of the world. Some the beautiful birds commonly

recorded in the area include populations of Alpine chat (*Cercomela sordida*), Ruppel's black chat (*Myrmecocichla semirufa*), Ruppel's chat (*Pentholaea melaena*), White-winged cliff chat (*Myrmecocichla semirufa*), Thick-billed raven (*Corvus crassirostris*), Wattled ibis (*Bostrychia carunculata*), White-billed starling (*Onychognathus albirostris*), Slender-billed starling (*Onychognathus tenuirostris*), Chestnut-winged starling (*Onychognathus fulgidus*), Abyssinian long-claw (*Macronyx flavicollis*), African citril (*Serinus citrinelloides*), White-throated seedeater (*Serinus Xanthopygius*), Streaky seedeater (*Serinus striolatus*), Black-winged lovebird (*Agapornis taranta*), Erckel's Francolin, (*Francolinus erckelii*), Moorland francolin (*Francolinus psilolaemus*), Scarce swift, (*Schoutedenapus myoptilus*), Alpine swift (*Tachymarptis melba*), Red-thighed Sparrow hawk (*Accipiter erythropus*), African black swift (*Apus barbatus*), Ankober serine (*Serinus ankoberensis*), Black-headed siskin, (*Serinus nigriceps*), Olive thrush (*Turdus olivaceus*), Blue Rock thrush (*Monticola solitaria*), Blue-winged goose (*Cyanochen cyanopterus*), Crag martin (*Hirundo rupstris*), Dusky turtle dove (*streptopelia lugens*), and White-collared pigeon (*Columba albitorques*) (Perlo, 1995). The dominantly juniper forest of Wof-washa is also a home for many endemic and globally threatened bird species (EWNHS, 1996). Ankober Serin, Black-headed Siskin and Abyssinia Long-claw are examples of Ethiopian endemic bird species found in this forest.

### 3.2. Materials and Methods

#### 3.2.1. Research Design

Cross-sectional study design was used to describe the existing situations and events of Wof-washa National Priority Forest Areas. Qualitative methods were employed and a questionnaire-based survey was designed in order to address the objectives of this study

#### 3.2.2. Target Population

The target population of the study was the local communities residing in Mascha Kebele from Ankober District, Wof-washa Genete Kebele<sup>1</sup> from Tarmaber District and Goshager Kebele, and Keyit Kebele from Bassonawerana Districts of the Wof-washa NFPA. Moreover, professionals from these districts' culture and tourism offices were key informants. The study area contained 2996 heads of household (Mescha 782, Wof-washa gente 552, Goshager 684, and Keyit 978) (Darwin Initiative Final Report, 2016).

#### 3.2.3. Sampling Techniques for Quantitative Method

Both probability and non-probability sampling methods were employed. In order to select respondents to fill the questionnaire, multistage sampling was used. These techniques are considered appropriate for the complex situation of studying Wof-washa National Forest Priority Area. First, four kebeles were selected from the 14 kebeles adjacent to the forest; the four kebeles chosen were Mascha from Ankober District, Wof-washa Genete from Tarmaber District, and Goshager and Keyit from Bassonawerana District. Second, to identify participants and to ensure proper representation of each kebele, systematic random sampling was employed after the total number of households was proportionally allocated.

#### 3.2.4. Sample Size Determination

The sample size for quantitative data gathering is determined using Cochran's Formula as indicated by Barlett et al (2001).

This study uses the following formula to calculate sample size:

$$nspz = \frac{n}{1 + (n/spz)}$$

Where nspz= minimum sample when the population is small

n = minimum sample when the population is large

spz = population size (small population)

Therefore,

$$nspz = \frac{228}{1 + (228/2996)} = 212$$

Therefore, the sample size determined at 5% precision and 95% confidence level was 212 households. These 212 households were proportionally allocated to each selected kebele as shown in (Table 1).

Table 1. Kebeles and sample proportion

No	Kebeles	Households	Sample selected	Percentage proportion
1	Mescha	782	55	26%
2	Wof Washa Genete	552	40	18%
3	Goshager	684	48	23%
4	Keyit	978	69	33%
Total		2996	212	100%

Source: own survey 2018

<sup>1</sup> The smallest government administrative unit



Data were collected from both primary and secondary data using household survey questionnaires.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

The completed questionnaires were cleaned, coded and entered to computer using SPSS Version 20.0 for analysis. Data were observed and cleaned for missing descriptive analysis. Frequency distribution, percentage, and average mean were calculated and interpreted to show a detailed picture of the existing situation on the study area.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Demographic Description

Of the four age categories, a majority (78.7%) of the household respondents were ages 41 & above (Table 1). Such age classes possibly have much experience in identifying the detailed information of tourism potential of the area.

Table 1: Demographic information

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>			<b>Marital status</b>		
Male	135	70.3	Single	122	63.5
Female	57	29.7	Married	47	24.5
<b>Total</b>	192	100.0	Divorced + Widowed	23	12.0
<b>Age</b>			<b>Total</b>	192	100.0
21 – 30	10	5.2	<b>Education</b>		
31 – 40	31	16.1	1-8	32	16.7
41 – 50	81	42.2	9-12	16	8.3
51 & above	70	36.5	College graduate and above	9	4.7
<b>Total</b>	192	100.0	Church education	33	17.2
<b>Sources of income</b>			Adult education	69	35.9
Agriculture	152	79.2	No schooling	33	17.2
Trade	15	7.8	<b>Total</b>	192	100.0
Salary	25	13.0			
<b>Total</b>	192	100.0			

Source: *Field Survey March, 2018*

Regarding marital status of the participant, 122 (63.5%) were married, and 47 (24.5%) respondents were single. 23 (12%) were either divorced or widowed. Both divorced or widowed and single respondents may exert higher pressure on the forest due to lack of agricultural land for their livelihoods. The Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area are dependent on subsistence agricultural activities and the forest is used as a source of income (Getachew, 2018), but currently agriculture is not sufficient to support the livelihood of the entire population.

(Table 1) also reveals the respondents' educational status: 102 (53.1%) of the respondents had attended adult education and church schools, 65 (33.9%) had attended formal education, and 9 (4.7%) received college-level education. Only 16 (8.3%) study participants had no formal education. In terms of occupation, the majority (79.2 %) of the households are engaged in subsistence farming and cereal crop production; common grains produced are maize, barley, sorghum, and teff. The rest are government workers (13%) and merchants (7.8%). Since the majority of the population are farmers, it is possible to say local communities have been imposing maximum pressure on the forest resources for agricultural activities.

### 4.2. Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area Tourism Potentials Attractions

#### 4.2.1. Physical Attractions

131 (68.2 %) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "the forest contains spectacular beauty, rivers, holy water and land form;" however, another 52 (27.1%) of respondents disagreed with the availability of those potentials. 9 (4.7%) were undecided. From open ended questions, the researchers found that respondents who do not agree on the potentials had not attended formal education and do not have ideas about tourism potentials. The result shows that the forest has spectacular beauty of landscape, caves, holy water, rivers, and exceptional views of remarkable land forms (Table 2). These stunning topographic features are steep and dissected by ravines and gorges through which rivers and streams tumble down the eastern escarpment of the Great Rift Valley (Birdlife International, 2018). The unique landscape is suitable for trekking and other sporting activities such as paragliding and rock climbing.

Of the 192 total research participant households, 165 (86%) either agreed or strongly agreed that Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area is endowed with a scenic landscape. 19 (9.9%) did not agree that the forest

has scenic landscapes, and only 8 (4.2%) were undecided. According to (Table 2) a majority of the respondents agreed that there was a scenic landscape available at Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area. The scenic landscape includes a steep escarpment and a narrow strip of the plateau overlooking the Afar Region, from just north of Ankober, north to Debre Sina in the vicinity of the Tarma Ber. This could provide activities such as trekking and backpacking for tourists.

#### 4.2.2. Biological Attractions

A majority 160 (83.3%) of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed on the potential, while 23 (12%) did not agree; only 9 (4.7%) were undecided. Among the potential bird species endemic to Ethiopia that can be seen in the area are Ankober serine (*Serinus ankoberensis*), Black-headed siskin, (*Serinus nigricaps*), and Abyssinian long-claw (*Macronyx flavicollis*) (EWHS, 1996) The Wattled ibis (*Bostrychia carunculata*), White-collared pigeon (*Columba albitorques*), Black-winged lovebird (*Agapornis taranta*), Thick-billed raven (*Corvus crassirostris*), White-billed Starling, (*Onychognathus albirostris*), Rouget's rail, Blue-winged Goose (*Cyanochen cyanopterus*), White-winged cliff Chat (*Mymecocichla semirufa*), White-billed Starling (*Onychognathus albirostris*), and Ruppel's chat (*Pentholaea melaena*), which are endemic to Ethiopia and Eritrea, can also be found in the area (Perlo 1995). Wof-washa forest consists over 252 plants species, among which 29 are endemic and 7 are nearly endemic (Teketay and Bekele 1995). Of the 33 mammals that could attract visitors, two large mammals, the Gelada baboon (*Theropithecus*) and Menelik's bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus meneliki*) are endemic (Birdlife International, 2018).

Table 2: Level of agreement on the Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area to develop CBET.

Variable / Attributes	Strongly disagreed		Disagreed		Undecided		Agreed		Strongly agreed		Mean
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
The forest contains spectacular beauty, rivers, holy water and land form	12	6.3	40	20.8	9	4.7	76	39.6	55	28.6	4.58
The forest is endowed with scenic landscape	9	4.7	10	5.2	8	4.2	81	42.2	84	43.8	4.49
The area is rich in biodiversity including endemic animals, birds and plants	10	5.2	13	6.8	9	4.7	74	38.5	86	44.8	4.58
Wof-washa national priority forest area consists historic, cultural features such as churches and attractive lifestyle and tradition	9	4.7	15	7.8	6	3.1	92	47.9	70	36.5	4.35
The local community is hospitable to welcome the tourist and eager to conserve the ecosystem of the forest	21	10.9	39	20.3	16	8.3	63	32.8	53	27.6	4.59
Agricultural practices that would be interesting to visitors are conducted in and adjacent to the forest.	20	10.4	62	32.3	16	8.3	56	29.2	38	19.8	4.69
<b>Average mean</b>											<b>4.55</b>

Source: researchers' own survey, 2018

#### 4.2.3. Cultural Attraction

162 (84.4%) respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area contained cultural and religious practices that can attract tourists. 24 (12.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed and 6 (3.1%) were undecided. Augmenting the respondents' agreement, our field observations confirmed that Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area harbors various churches, such as Abo Washa, the town of Aliyu Amba, the tomb of Abdul Resud, and the church of Ankober *Medehanialem*, where Emperor Menelik II and his wife Empress Itegue Taitu performed their wedding ceremony and where Menelik II's golden wedding cloak is still kept.

There are many more famous Ethiopian Orthodox monasteries and churches in the surrounding area, including Mantiq, a nearby monastery with Judeo-Christian traditions (Birdlife International, 2018). The long history of Christianity in the study area has shaped a cultural heritage that includes distinct styles of music, manuscripts, dress, crafts, and architecture which could be tourism resources to develop community-based ecotourism in the area.

According to (Table 2) 116 (60.5%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the local communities are hospitable and welcoming to the visitors, while 60 (31.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. 16 (8.3%) were undecided about the hospitality of local communities to tourists. A majority of the respondents agreed that the local communities had a hospitable and welcoming manner. The communities who live in and around Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area have experience hosting travellers (i.e. European diplomats, Catholic missionaries) since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These data show that, in addition to the natural and cultural tourism potentials, the local community is hospitable and welcoming to tourism (Spoon, 2014).

In many countries, traditional agricultural systems can often attract significant numbers of travelers and thus help create a market for agritourism (Thompson *et al.* 2016). Table 2 shows that 118 (61.5%) thought the local agricultural practices could be interesting to visitors. 58 (30.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed and 16 (8.3%) were undecided. Wof-washa communities' traditional subsistence-agriculture system has been a spectacular attraction for agritourism.

From the open ended questionnaires researchers found that the communities have customs and cultural practices, traditional lifestyles, unique dressing styles, and both secular and spiritual annual festivals that could attract tourists to Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area.

#### **4.2.4. Infrastructure as Attraction**

Tourism infrastructure is the basis of tourism development and the utilization of an existing destination. As shown in Figure 2, 212 (100 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed on the availability of electricity in the area. In regard to sufficient water resources to accommodate more travellers, 100% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed. Almost 100% of the respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed on the other most important part of physical infrastructure: roads, pathways and other facilities are sufficient". Infrastructure (i.e. roads, water, electricity, safety services, health services, communications and public transportation) is a key determinant explaining tourist arrivals (Gearing, 1974). It is necessary to meet the needs of tourists and increase satisfaction during their stay at the destination.

## **5. CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.1. CONCLUSION**

Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area is rich in both natural and cultural resources and has great potential to develop a community-based ecotourism business to enhance the livelihood of the communities in and around the area. The topographical ruggedness with its steep escarpments and rolling highland hills could make the site a unique tourist destination. The study area is rich in biodiversity, with endemic and endangered faunal and floral species, providing yet another tourist attraction. The rich cultural practices and ancient traditional livelihoods of the people living in this remote area offers similar tourism potentials that can promote community-based ecotourism. A majority of the local community in each kebele is cooperative, receive visitors in welcoming manner, and are supportive of the industry.

### **5.2. RECOMMENDATION**

For effective utilization of Wof-washa National Priority Forest's tourism potential, stakeholders shall promote the resources through different media, while giving due attention to the site's conservation. Since infrastructure is the base for tourism development, government authorities, non-governmental organizations, private investors, and the local community shall collaborate to develop the infrastructural capacity for more visitors. In order to improve the livelihood of the locals living in the Wof-washa National Priority Forest Area, Amhara Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau shall pay special attention to the potential of community-based ecotourism development.

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